



A Matter of Justice
An Annotated Bibliography of Sources about John Freeman
Prepared by Gwendolyn J. Crenshaw

Primary Sources

Land documents

Marion County. Deed Book 1 Town Lot Record.

The deed signed on 30 July 1853 from John Freeman to William Hubbard, Clerk of the State Bank was detailed in this book. Freeman, according to the written record turns over his properties in trust to Hubbard. On the next page, John Ketcham acting as a notary public, secured Letitia Freeman's mark giving up her interests and dower in the properties.

Marion County. G-I-3 Date 1824-1853 Land Deed Index General Index To Deed Records of 1823-1930 Land in Marion County F-G.

This index shows land purchases by and from for the years indicated. It is mostly in alphabetical order and logs the kind of deed, date of deed, the amount of consideration, the town lot number, the name of the town where the land was sold and purchased, the description of the property, the section, township, number of acres, hundredths, and the month, day and year of when the sale and purchase was recorded and the book and page number in which it was recorded.

Between 1844 and 1852, John Freeman purchased many acres of land in Indianapolis. While it is unknown whether he purchased more land, records show that he began purchasing land in the fall of 1844, the year that he arrived in Indianapolis. The earliest entry is for 23 September 1844. Freeman purchased the W ½ of town lot 12 in square 14 from John Deringer for two hundred and fifty dollars. In January, February and August, Freeman received land from David Cully 11 January 1848 for sixty-five dollars, from Harry Wright, 5 February 1848 for sixty dollars and received land from Lucy Wright on 18 August 1848 apparently as a gift. All this land was located in St. Clair's Addition, presently located near Tenth and Meridian.

On 11 January 1851 Freeman purchased land from John Patterson for \$500.00, land from Ed Hill for two hundred thirty dollars in St. Clair's addition, and land from S. A. Fletcher in Henderson's Addition.

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General Index To Deed Record of Town Lots Deed Book 1 Date 1853-1857.

This index listed the names of the grantors and grantee[s], the kind of deed, the date of deed, amount of consideration, town lots, description, name of town, description of the location of the property, when it was recorded, the town lot book and page numbers. On 30 July 1853, John Freeman granted William Hubbard land in St. Clair's Addition, O. Mifflin's Subdivision and Henderson's Addition for one dollar. Curiously, the deed was recorded 29 July 1853. No other entries on the page were recorded the day before sale.

Census Records

Sixth United States Census (1840) Georgia, Walton County, Population Schedules.

Microcopy No. M-704 Roll 52. While John Freeman and Creed Jennings, one of the men who came to testify in Freeman's behalf, were not listed on this census, Leroy Patillo was listed in the town of Monroe. He did not own any slaves. There was a Langley Jennings listed with several males in his household. This Jennings was in the county and owned slaves.

United States Government. Seventh United States Census (1850) Indiana Marion County, Population Schedules. Microfilm No. M-432 Roll 59.

John Freeman, at No. 5 was listed as thirty-five years old. At this time, it is not known whether age was an error. Freeman was reportedly born in Prince Edward County, Virginia in 1807. The occupation listed for Freeman was so scribbled that it was undecipherable. However, his property was valued at \$7,000. It appears that the enumerator made one continuous stroke connecting the seven and the zero. Consequently, at first glance, the value looked like \$2,000.

Also listed in the household were L[e]titia Freeman, age 26, black, no occupation listed born in Kentucky; Frances Freeman, age 3, born in Indiana; Mary Freeman, age 1, black, born in Indiana; Lucy Wright, age 65, no occupation listed, born in Virginia. It is not known, at this time, whether this is the Lucy Wright who gave Freeman land or what her relationship was to Freeman or his wife.

Catherine Davis was also listed in the household. She was listed as black, born in Kentucky (she probably had some relationship to Freeman's wife) with no occupation and ninety years old.

United States Government. Seventh United States Census Missouri M-432 Roll 410.

Pleasant Ellington at 52 52, in Preston Township, was listed as a forty-six year old farmer with property valued at \$16,240. He, like Freeman was born in Virginia. It is unclear whether Ellington's age was correct in 1850. Members of his household included: Mary Ellington who was fifty eight also born in Virginia; an undecipherable female who was twenty-three years old, born in Kentucky; William, seven, born in Missouri, whose last name was the same as the twenty-three year old female's; Morton, five, born in Missouri, whose surname was also that of the female and Virginia Tutt, a twenty-one year old female born in Kentucky. No occupations were listed for the females.

At 54 Sarah Ellington, a thirty-six year old female with no occupation born in Kentucky was listed. Mary Reynolds, who was twenty six, and born in Canada, Preston Carrington[?], eleven,

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born in Missouri, Tulia Jones a ten year old born in Missouri, and Theodore Dodd a seven year old male born in Kentucky were also in the household. No occupations were listed for anyone.

Court Documents

Freeman v. Ellington

Documents relating to this case in the Marion Circuit Court are held by the Indiana State Archives.

Freeman v. Robinson 7 Indiana 321 (1855)

City Directory

Indianapolis City Directory (1855). In 1855, John Freeman lived on Meridian Street, outside the city limits between Second (now Tenth) and Third (now Eleventh) Streets. He had a restaurant located in the basement of the Beehive Company on Meridian Street between Washington Street and the Circle.

Indianapolis City Directory (1862). John Freeman lived on Meridian off Second Street and maintained an oyster bar under the telegraph office in Indianapolis.

Manuscript Collections

John Ketcham Papers (M0173) William Smith Library, Indiana Historical Society. Several items in this collection are related to John Freeman. One example is a receipt which reads: "Rec'd of John Freeman by the hand of Barbour and Ketcham his attorneys ninety dollars [for] traveling expenses for Monroe Georgia to Indianapolis Indiana and back again as a witness in the case of Pleasant Ellington against John Freeman before Wm Sullivan Esq, where Ellington claimed said Freeman as his slave, this 30th August 1853. [signed] W.H. Bainbory[?]"

Newspapers

Chapman's Chanticleer (Indianapolis)

The Indiana Free Democrat (Indianapolis)

Indiana Journal (Indianapolis)

The Liberator (Boston)

The Locomotive (Indianapolis)

Topeka Daily Capital (Topeka, KS)

The Voice of the Fugitive (Chatham, Canada)

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Published Monographs

Broyles, Elder Moses. The History of Second Baptist Church of Indianapolis, With the Administration of All Her Pastors, Her Sunday School, Church Property, Etc. by Elder Moses Broyles, Pastor. Indianapolis: Printing and Publishing House Print, 1876.

In his discussion of the history of Second Baptist Church, Rev. Broyles noted that John Freeman served as a deacon and was a trustee. He said during the Civil War, Freeman and other members of the church had an ideological dispute. This dispute may be the reason that Freeman decided to leave Indianapolis for Canada.

Drew, Benjamin. A North-Side View of Slavery. The Refugee: or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related By Themselves, With an Account of the History and Condition of the Colored Population of Upper Canada. Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1856.

Drew collected first hand accounts of free blacks and fugitive slaves who fled to Canada by 1855. One of these was Thomas Hedgebeth, a free-born black man from North Carolina who spent a number of years in Indianapolis. He was also a deacon at Second Baptist Church. Hedgebeth told Drew that he fled to Canada as a result of the John Freeman case because he feared that he might be taken like Freeman and suffer a different outcome.

Fletcher, Calvin. The Diary of Calvin Fletcher. ed. Gayle Thornbrough, et. al. 9 vols. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977.

Fletcher discussed the daily events of his life, his family, the people he encountered and his opinions related to them, politics, events in Indianapolis and Indiana, and the political fabric of his time. Volumes five (1853-1856) and nine (1865-1866) contain references to John Freeman. Fletcher details the circumstances of Freeman's arrest 21 June 1853 and that Freeman has formerly served as a sexton at 2nd Presbyterian and that he had acquired considerable property. It was Fletcher who wrote that Freeman had free papers but that the "laws of Congress have been made for the slaveholder & not the freeman." In volume 9, Willis Brown, a black farmer who had property in Indianapolis and in Canada, tells Fletcher that he saw John Freeman's family in Canada (1865-1866).

O. H. Smith. Early Indiana Trials and Sketches. Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys & Company, 1858.

O. H. Smith, a former United States Senator from Indiana and a railroad magnate wrote his recollections of people, biographical information and the like in this monograph. His recollection of the Freeman incident was that it occurred when he was out of town but that he, and most citizens, knew Freeman as an "honest, industrious, sober man." It was Smith, as far as is known now, who incorrectly assumed that Freeman was a native of Georgia and that Ellington lived in Kentucky. Smith described Freeman as a "low, heavy-set man, muddy brown, and by no means black like Sam, and at least six inches shorter." He details how Judge Major of the Marion Circuit Court issued a writ of *habeas corpus*, but that the case was ultimately turned over to William Sullivan, United States Commissioner.

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Secondary Sources

Blassingame, John W. The Slave Community Plantation Life in the Antebellum South New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

John Blassingame is one of several recent historians who challenge the theory of earlier scholars regarding the happy and contented slave.” Blassingame examines the social mores and politics slaves maintained in their own communities, their love for self-expression through language and education, their rejection of the slaveholders’ institutions and values and their cultural movement from African to African American.

Cord, Xenia E. “Black Settlements in Indiana Before 1860,” in Indiana’s African American Heritage, ed. Wilma Gibbs. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993.

Cord described the nearly thirty black settlements that free blacks mostly from Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee created throughout the state during the 1820s and 1830s. She related how these free black people created an ethos and community that was necessary because of exclusion from the dominant society and the laws against them in Indiana.

Dunn, Jacob Piatt. Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions, and the People of a City of Names. Chicago: The Lew’s Publishing Company, 1910.

Pages 244-250 of this work concern the events surrounding the Freeman case. Dunn draws information from O. H. Smith and possibly others. His is the first entry, so far as is known, to purports that John Freeman moved to Canada because he thought that the South would win the war. From this fallacy he interjects that this was in fact why Freeman left for Canada.

Money, Charles H. “The Fugitive Slave Law in Indiana,” Indiana Magazine of History 17 (June and September 1921): 159-198; 257-297.

Regarding the Freeman Case, Money’s article is virtually a copy of Jacob Piatt Dunn’s. Therefore, it makes the same mistakes as Dunn. Ellington was not from St. Louis, Missouri. He was from Platte County, Missouri. A letter in the Money article, “Platte County, Missouri dated 24 July 1854,” gives a key to where Ellington lived and what supposedly happened to him.

Thornbrough, Emma Lou. “Indiana and the Fugitive Slave Legislation,” Indiana Magazine of History 44 (September 1954): 3; 222-225.

Thornbrough discussed the fugitive slave law and its application in Indiana. Nothing she wrote was really new information as related to John Freeman. She relied on the Money article and at one point she mistakenly calls Freeman John Williams, a wealthy black man from Washington County, Indiana.

Thornbrough, Emma Lou. The Negro in Indiana Before 1900 A Study of A Minority. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1957.

Thornbrough chronicled the history of blacks in Indiana from the 1700s to 1900. She described their efforts to resist their enslavement in Indiana, their quest for freedom, parity, comity, education, citizenship and enfranchisement.

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Williams, Sandra Boyd. "The Indiana Supreme Court and the Struggle Against Slavery," Indiana Law Review 30 (1997): 305-317.

This article discusses the work of Indiana judiciary, more particularly its dealings with slavery. Boyd reviews several cases involving black indentured servants and alleged fugitive slaves, including the Freeman case. She also places Indiana events within the larger national context.